HOLY RUSSIA

AND OTHER POEMS

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN

P. E. MATHESON

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HOLY RUSSIA

AND OTHER POEMS

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN

BY

P. E. MATHESON

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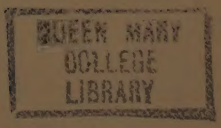

To the Russian People

ONLY by knowledge won through toil and pain,
Through sympathy into the spirit wrought
Of two great peoples, can their lives be brought
To work together for that priceless gain,
The rule of freedom in a world at peace,
Wherein shall live and move, unfolding still
Their noblest gifts and powers of mind and will,
All nations and the clash of arms shall cease.
Too little we have tried to know your mind;
Have read and judged you ill, and some have deemed
Your day's eclipse a night that will not end.
God grant your hour of need new strength may find
To win the great deliverance that you dreamed,
And stand by England's side a trusted friend.

PREFACE

It may seem an impertinence for one who has but lately begun the study of Russian to offer translations to the public. My excuse must be that my reading, such as it is, of Russian lyrics, to which I have been guided by Mr. J. D. Duff, *Russian Lyrics* (Cambridge University Press), Messrs. Semeonoff and Tillyard, *Russian Poetry Reader* (Messrs. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co.), and by the Anthology published in St. Petersburg by Porphirov in 1895, for which I am indebted to Dr. Hagberg Wright, has given me much pleasure, and that those to whom I have read my versions seem to think that they convey something of the distinctive spirit and atmosphere of Russian life. For the moment the rude shock of disappointment caused by the failure of the Revolutionary Government has given rise to a violent reaction which threatens fatally to hamper our future relations with Russia. Anything therefore which may help in the smallest degree to make Russian life and ideas better known in England seems worth attempting. We pinned our faith unintelligently enough on the Russian people as a military force, and when that failed us, though not until after some splendid and heroic achievements, we are inclined with equal want of intelligence to despair of Russia altogether and

refuse to have anything to do with the Russian people. And yet the future of Eastern Europe and of Asia must depend very largely on the question whether the Russian people reorganized in its national life, shall stand by the side of France, Italy, England, and America to guarantee the free life of the future by an invincible league of nations.

Most of the poets included in this volume belong to the past, but if one may believe the evidence of modern writers on Russia, whether Russian or English, these poems illustrate what are still characteristic features of the Russian spirit. They are simple both in form and expression; sometimes elemental in their conciseness and reserve of language. They are full of a true love of the beauty of the material world, and in particular of the glory of Spring, with its radiant greenery and rushing waters after the frost-bound stillness and monotony of the Russian winter. With this love of nature is bound up the sense of the part played by the seasons in the life of the country folk; and the peasants, it must be remembered, are the main population of Russia. Their life of hardship and struggle is a perpetual burden in the background of Russian poetry, and finds poignant utterance in two poems of this collection, while in a third, the beautiful 'Harvest' of Koltsóv, the story of the corn-crop from the storm that prepares the soil to the thanksgiving which crowns the harvest is told in a few vivid phrases which call up a succession of pictures more effectively than whole periods of picturesque language would do. There are the suggestions of frontier-life in the lovely Cossack

cradle-song and the death of the Georgian novice, and of the monotony of travel in the 'Post-House'; while the 'Road Picture' and the 'Winter Night' illustrate features of country life in its tranquil and stormy aspects. But the poems which have most to say to those of us who are reading to-day are those which emphasize the harder aspects of life—such as 'The Convicts' and 'The Exile', and above all the 'Cry of the Peasant'. If the prevailing note of these poems is sad, it is not hopeless. 'Holy Russia', in twelve short lines, sums up the fine thought that Russia, poor desert country as it is, is a consecrated land; and the great poem of Nadson, 'O my brother, my friend', is a noble protest against the bankruptcy of civilized life and an appeal to mankind not to lose faith in its ideals, in goodness and the spirit of love. If the general impression left is a little melancholy it is relieved by touches of humour and humanity such as one finds in the 'Post-House' and in Pushkin's poem to his old nurse, the friend and the companion of his youthful exile: and several poems in this collection show that Russian poetry can express the fire and the pathos of the passion of love with sincerity and force.

There has been much discussion of late whether the Russians are truly a religious people. The poems in this selection show that religious belief and worship are an element in the daily life of the peasant folk, but apart from the more definite religious allusions the view of life expressed in the more serious lyrics shows a profound sense of the greatness and mystery of the world, of the processes of

nature as the expression of a divine power, and of the eternal value of the ideals of justice and humanity. A poem like Nadson's 'Life' does, it is true, strike a note of bewilderment and almost of despair, but no one can read his 'Triumph of Love' without feeling inspired by the words of this young poet, doomed to an early death, to have faith in the ultimate triumph of righteousness. There are those who believe that the regeneration of Russia will be achieved by a revival in her Church: whether that be so or not, no political reconstruction will have permanent effect unless it draws upon these spiritual forces, unless it is inspired by that belief in a divine order and goodness, and in the free life of the spirit, which is the common possession of the nations that are making war against the doctrine that might is right.

I wish to thank the editors of the two English volumes of Selections, whose notes I have found very useful, and my friend Mr. R. W. A. Leeper of New College, who has given me much help and encouragement in my translations. I have also to thank the Editor of *The Hibbert Journal* for permission to republish *The Triumph of Love*.

P. E. MATHESON.

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Holy Russia

A BEGGAR'S hut, a country side
  Not blest with wealth or grand,
A country by long suffering tried,
  Russia, my native land.

The foreigner with scornful gaze
  Nor sees nor heeds the wealth
That glimmers through thy hidden ways
  And humbly flowers by stealth.

The Lord of heaven His cross who bore,
  My land beyond compare,
A Servant walked thy acres o'er
  And left His blessing there.

TYUTCHEV.

The First Leaves

THE first green leaves how fair!
See how the birch-tree's green
Fresh leaves are waving there,
Ethereal and translucent in the air
Like half-transparent mist, a verdant screen.

They dreamed Spring long ago,
Spring and bright Summer's gold:
Their dream's alive, and lo!
In the first azure sky they now unfold,
Piercing the daylight in a sudden show.

O first fresh leaves how fair!
Drenched in the sun's warm rays
Shadows new born they throw,
And as we hear their movement sure we know
That on their thousand and ten thousand sprays
Not one dead leaf in all the host is there.

TYUTCHEV.

On a Death-bed

All day unconscious she was lying there,
And evening shadows came and wrapt her round;
Warm summer rain fell soft upon the leaves
In steady flow and made a cheerful sound.

And slowly she returned into herself,
And strained her sense the pleasant sounds to hear,
And listened long, her mind absorbed in thought
That carried her away, yet left her near.

Then, as one speaking to herself, alone,
Now conscious of the sound and all beside
(I watched her, yet alive, though death was near),
'How dearly have I loved all this!' she sighed.

Ah how thou lov'dst it! and to love like thee
Has to none other in the world been given!
My God! and can I then her death survive
And my poor heart in fragments not be riven?

Tyutchev.

Spring

Not long will Winter ravin,
  Her day is nearly past,
Spring at the window knocking
  Will drive her flying fast.

Now all the world grows busy,
  Winter is chased along,
And high in air the laverock
  Uplifts his cheerful song.

Though Winter fume for ever,
  And Spring the invader scold,
Spring only grows more noisy,
  Her laughter still more bold.

Winter, the witch, grows furious,
  And, as she runs away,
Picks up and flings a snowball
  At the fair child of May.

But Spring is little troubled,
  She bathes her face in snow,
And ever shines more lovely
  As angrier grows her foe.

Tyutchev.

The Exile

God with His comfort help the beggar
Who drags along the sultry street
On the hard pavement past the garden,
A pauper in the summer's heat!

Aside he glances through the paling
Where shady trees and grassy dell
And verdant lawns in level brightness
Of Paradise forbidden tell.

Ah not for him the trees their shadow
Spread ample and inviting there,
Ah not for him the flowing fountain
Lifts high its smoky cloud in air!

The grotto blue with misty coolness
In vain doth beckon him within,
His head the fountain's dewy freshness,
Strive as he may, will never win.

God with His comfort help the needy
Who dragging on life's path are seen,
Like the poor beggar on the pavement
Passing the garden cool and green!

Tyutchev.

Poor Folk

I WAS not softly cradled
  Nor knew luxurious ways,
But ever toiled and laboured
  In cold or sultry days;
Bore manifold distresses
  And grappled hard with fate,
My hard hands knew no resting
  But early toiled and late.

I rose before the sunrise,
  Sleep never held me bound,
In weather wild no shelter
  Against the storm I found;
Drove with my plough the furrow
  Through the deep earth with pain,
Now scorched with heat and dusty,
  Now drenched with chilling rain.

The circling sun beheld me
  At many tasks in turn,
Now with strong walls upbuilding
  A dyke to check the burn,
Now homes of stone erecting
  For others' folk alone,
While scarce a roof possessing
  Of straw to shield my own.

Poor Folk

Once in the early season
  When I was young and strong
I recked not of the burden
  Of those hard tasks and long;
Lived simply, got together
  What was enough to keep
Myself and wife and children:
  Content made easy sleep.

But youth has now slipped from me,
  And it is mine no more,
My supple back is stiffened
  By labour hard and sore.
To lie in bed and suffer,
  A cripple and bereft,
To wait death's cruel coming
  Is all my world that's left.

SHISHKÓV.

The Bird's Voice

THE drops were falling softly,
The sound of rain had died;
Softly the leaves were whispering,
Afar the cuckoo cried.

The moon from out the rain-cloud
Looked through a mist of tears:
I sat beneath a maple
And dreamt of bygone years.

That then my soul was stainless
Of vice may not be true,
But much I'd ne'er have asked it
Then to believe and do.

Now evil, craft and cunning
With years I've come to know,
And seen my nobler visions
One after other go.

I mused of days departed,
Days innocent and good;
From the tall maple near me
Rang through the leafy wood

A nightingale's pure passion,
Attuned to say, 'Complain
No more for naught, take comfort,
That time will come again'.

A. TOLSTOI.

A Road Picture

As I drive past the weir in my carriage,
Unevenly jolting along
By the fishermen's nets left adrying,
I sit and the busy thoughts throng.

I sit and I look on the roadway,
On the sky that is dismal and grey,
On the lake and the banks sloping round it,
And the blue village smoke far away.

Past the weir with a face sad and sullen
I see an old ragged Jew go;
Through the weir from the lake, singing loudly,
The water comes dashing below.

There a boy on a pan-pipe is playing
As he climbs in the rushes so green,
And startled ducks flying and calling
Right over the water are seen.

Near the mill-house now ancient and crazy
The peasants sit out on the grass,
Some jaded old nags with a wagon
And load of sacks lazily pass.

All the scene to me looks so familiar,
Though here was I never before,
The boy and the roof in the distance,
The wood and the lake and the shore.

A Road Picture

And the mill with its doleful old clacking,
  The field where they thresh out the grain—
All this in past days I have looked on
  And long ago lost it again:

So once the same wagon and horses
  Their loaded sacks drawing I've seen;
Just so the old mill and the peasants
  That sit all about on the green.

Just so passed the Jew grim and bearded,
  Just so the loud water rushed then,
All this was far back in the ages
  One day, but I cannot mind when.

A. Tolstoi.

The Scent of the Birch

'Twas early Spring, and the shoots
Of the grass were scarcely showing,
The brook ran fast through the glimmering wood
Ere summer's heat was glowing.

Not yet the herd at morn
Piped, to his pasture hieing,
The fern in the forest paths
Curled in the sheath was lying.

'Twas in early spring, in the shade
Of the birch that your eyes discovered,
As they drooped before mine their secret,
And a smile on your fair face hovered.

To my love 'twas your only answer
To droop your eyes before me.
Oh life! oh forest! oh sunshine bright!
Oh youth, and the hopes before me!

I wept before you, sweet,
Your face with mine eyes caressing,
'Twas early Spring and the birch's shade
Witnessed our love's confessing.

'Twas the morning of our years.
Oh joy! oh tears and sighing!
Oh forest! oh life! oh sunshine bright!
Oh scent of the birch undying!

A. Tolstoi.

Love's Tide

DEAR, when I say, 'My love for you is dead',
Ah! trust me not—'tis but excess of pain—
When the tide ebbs, think not the sea is fled,
Love brings it flowing back to earth again.

E'en now my former passion fills my soul,
Accept my heart's surrender as of yore!
E'en now the refluent wave begins to roll
Far off, and hastens toward its native shore.

A. TOLSTOI.

Midnight Thoughts

OUTSIDE the wild storm rages,
Within, all's sleeping sound,
Sighing I see through the window
The garden in gloom profound.

The sky grows dark and darker,
No star gives a flicker of light,
The old house seems so dismal
Amid the stormy night.

Rain on the roof drums loudly;
Will the rattling lustres fall?
The mice behind the cupboard
Stir in the papered wall.

They are hunting to find new quarters,
For, soon as the master's dead,
The heir will forsake the homestead
Where a valiant race was bred.

The home will be empty for ever,
Grass hide its steps from sight.
The thought makes the house so dismal
Amid the stormy night!

A. TOLSTOI.

The Post-House

How familiar is the dreary
  Post-house coming into sight!
Hark, the master snores, the drowsy
  Pendulum ticks out the night.

Swings to right and swings to leftward,
  Waking trains of memory long,
Things once learnt by heart recalling,
  Many an ancient tale and song.

In the candlestick the candle
  Flames its last and gutters low,
Barks a dog far off, the ticking
  Pendulum goes to and fro.

Right and left tick-tack slow swinging,
  Tells the tales of long ago,
Sadly ever. Am I sleeping
  Or awake? I do not know.

Now the horses, see, are ready;
  I am seated; gallop quick. . . .
What! Once more I face the picture
  Of the candle's guttering wick;

See the old familiar, dreary
  Post-house coming into sight,
While the master snores, the dreary
  Pendulum ticks out the night.

A. Tolstoi.

The Convicts

THE sun is setting on the plains
  And gilds afar the grass;
The road is dusty where in chains
  Clanking the convicts pass.
Close shaved, with heavy dragging steps,
  Onward you see them go,
With sullen knitted brows that hide
  The doubting thoughts below.
Tall shadows follow, by them goes
  A cart with sorry nags,
The guard with slow unwilling feet
  Beside the convoy drags.

'Come, brothers, let us raise a song,
  Forget our lot forlorn;
Disaster long ago was writ
  For us when we were born.'
So striking up with lifted voice
  They pour a roundelay
Of Volga's wide expanse and days
  That idly pass away;
Sing of the free and open plains
  Glad liberty that keep.
Day darkens as their clanking chains
  The dusty roadway sweep.

A. TOLSTOI.

My Country

LAND of mine where I was bred!
Horses racing swiftly by!
Eagles calling overhead!
Wolves across the field that cry!
Hail! thou native country mine!
Hark! the nightingale sings loud!
Hail, dear land of thickset pine,
Wind and steppe and stormy cloud!

A. TOLSTOI.

Storm-clouds

Ye clouds of heaven, that, linked in pearly chain,
Over the azure steppe go wandering forth,
As I in exile go, so hasten ye
To southern climes from our belovéd north.

What bids you hurry? Is it fate's decree?
Mysterious envy, malice unconcealed?
Does sense of guilt compel you, or the sting
Of friends' malignant calumny revealed?

Nay! Ye but weary of the unfertile fields;
Passion and suffering to you are strange:
Ye have no country, exile ye have none,
Who with cold heart, yet free for ever, range.

Lermontov

The Dying Novice[1]

A Georgian boy, who has run away from a monastery, is brought back dying, and addresses the Abbot.

Bid them, when death is coming near—
'Twill quickly come, you need not fear—
Take me where in the garden fair
Two white acacias bloomed; the air
Was fresh and fragrant and, between,
The springing grass was thick and green;
And the transparent leaves so bright
Danced in the sunshine's golden light.
There bid them lay me; as I lie
The glorious beauty of the sky
For the last time I'll quaff; from there
See Caucasus afar in air.
Haply the mountain from his height
Will send me, borne on breezes light
And cool, a greeting ere I die,
Wafting my native land's good-bye;
So ere the end again I'll hear
My native music in my ear:
And dream that bending over me
A friend's or brother's form I see,

[1] This is part of a longer poem, 'Mtsyri': see Prince Kropotkin's *Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature*, p. 54.

The Dying Novice

Who'll wipe death's moisture from my brow
With tender hand—a friend knows how—
And murmur soft the songs that tell
Of my own land I love so well.
So dreaming I shall sink to rest
And still the curse within my breast.

LERMONTOV.

A Cossack Cradle Song

Rest, fair baby, softly sleeping,
BAIOSHKI′ BAIO′.[1]
Silent moon her watch is keeping
O'er your crib below.
I will tell you tales of faery,
Sing you soft and low,
Slumber close your tender eyelids!
BAIOSHKI′ BAIO′.

Terek[2] o'er the stones is fretting
With his turbid roar;
Wild Chechen[3] now whets his dagger,
Creeps along the shore;
But your father, tempered soldier,
All war's art doth know;
Sleep, my darling, sleep in quiet.
BAIOSHKI′ BAIO′.

You will learn—the time is coming—
All that soldiers dare,
Put your foot into the stirrup,
Rifle bravely bear:
And your saddle I'll embroider,
Silk for battle show.
Sleep, sweet child, my own dear baby.
BAIOSHKI′ BAIO′.

[1] In this refrain the accent on both words is on the last syllable.
[2] The frontier river. [3] A wild tribe beyond the river.

A Cossack Cradle Song

You will wear a hero's features,
  Cossack true at heart,
I shall see you ride to battle,
  Waving hand you'll start;
But my tears, hot tears, in secret
  On that night will flow.
Sleep, my angel, soft and sweetly.
    BAIOSHKI′ BAIO′.

Soon distress begins to wear me,
  Comfortless I wait,
All day long I'm busy praying,
  Nightly spell your fate,
Dream that in a foreign country
  Homesick, lorn, you go.
Sleep, my darling, care you know not.
    BAIOSHKI′ BAIO′.

You shall have a holy picture
  Travel days to share.
You will pray to God and set it
  Just before you there.
Think of me, my son, while arming
  'Gainst the perilous foe,
Sleep, my pretty, sleep, my baby.
    BAIOSHKI′ BAIO′.

LERMONTOV.

Harvest

GLOWING the sunrise
Has lit the sky red:
On the face of earth
The mist is spreading.
Day has begun to blaze
With fire of sunshine:
Has lifted the mist
Over the hill-top,
There compacted
Into black rain-cloud:
The rain-cloud darkling
Frowned and frowned again
In meditation
Like one rememb'ring
Whence she has risen.
She will be carried
By winds boisterous
To all the quarters
Of radiant earth:
Equips herself with
Thunder, storm-wind,
Fire of lightning,
Rainbow glory—

With this equipment
Stretches her arm out,
Strikes her blow,
Pouring herself in
Tears abundant
Of rain that floods over
Earth's broad bosom
Spread to receive it.

And from heaven's hill
Looketh the sun;
The earth has drunk deep
And is contented.
On field and garden green
Folk of the country
Gaze without ceasing—
Folk of the country
Have waited God's grace
With prayer and trembling.
Soon as the Spring comes
Peaceful thoughts within
Their hearts awaken.
First they bethink them
With grain from the store
Their sacks to fill,
Wagons get ready.
Next they bethink them
Betimes from the village
One after one to drive:
Thirdly their thought was—

Harvest

How deeply thinking!—
To God our Lord
Prayers to offer.
Dawn comes and all then,
Far afield marching,
Friend after friend they go,
Scattering grain there,
Plentiful handfuls.
Then they go on to break
Earth with the plough,
And with curved ploughshare
Plough it all over,
Aye and with harrow's teeth
Cut it to pieces.

I'll go see the sight,
With full heart gazing.
What has the Lord sent
For the folk's labour?
High as the waist see
Rye-stalks grain-laden
Hang their heads drowsily
Nigh to the ground,
Like a guest of God
Smiling on all hands
To the glad daylight,
And the breeze over them
Quivers in brightness,
Golden, undulant,
To and fro speeding.

Harvest

Folk by households
Have set a-reaping,
Cut at the roots there
The tall rye-stalks.
In serried shocks, lo
Heaped are the sheaves,
And the wains all night
Creak their music.
On the threshing-floors
Prince-like the corn-ricks
Sit on wide thrones
With heads uplifted.
Sun watches all
The reaping completed,
Then growing cooler
Moves on to autumn.
But the villager's
Candle burns bright
Before the picture
Of God's Mother.

KOLTSÓV.

The Last Struggle

OVERHEAD the storm is raging,
Roars in heaven the thunder fierce,
Quails my mind at fate's encounter,
And a chill my heart doth pierce.

Yet my pain has not undone me,
Proud I've borne the strokes that came,
Force of will sustained my spirit,
And my heart its inward flame.

Ah what ruin! what deliverance!
Nought shall hurt me, come what may,
God's good providence I've trusted
Long ago and trust to-day.

This, untouched by doubt or turning,
Is the faith my life doth fill:
To this faith my heart is yearning,
Rests in this, serene and still.

The Last Struggle

Fate may threaten me with evil,
  Challenge me to mortal fight;
I am ready for the battle
  Nor shall yield me to her might.

Strength I have to nerve my spirit,
  In my heart the blood flows yet,
'Neath the cross I will be buried,
  On the cross my love is set.

KOLTSÓV.

A Hawk's Thoughts

SHALL I stay evermore
  Living at home,
Wasting my youth while I
  Never may roam?

Shall I at window watch,
  Where the road lies
Far away, day and night
  Straining my eyes?

Are the hawk's pinions then
  Unfettered never,
Must he find all his ways
  Barred him for ever?

Fears he mid foreign folk
  Far to be gone,
With fortune stepmother
  Living alone?

Why is his heart's desire
  The world to see,
Why does his spirit yearn
  To fly so free?

A Hawk's Thoughts

Why does my darling then[1]
  For ever stay
Weeping beside me here
  Her eyes away?

Nay, she flies from me now,
  Sings me a song,
And singing beckons me
  With her along.

Enough! No longer then
  I'll rest at home
And from the window scan
  Roads I would roam:

Where the road beckons, I'll
  Fly to a land
Where life begins for me
  At God's command.

KOLTSÓV.

[1] The poet seems to be speaking of his own spirit and its waverings. See J. D. Duff's *Russian Lyrics*, p. 65.

Song

I LOVED him with love
That was hotter than flame,
Others' love to the height
Of my love never came.

One life in the world
I lived with him alone,
My spirit surrendered
My life to his own.

What a night! what a moon!
As I wait for my dear,
All chilly and pale,
Faint, I shiver with fear.

Ah he comes now, he sings,
'Where's my darling?' and holds
My hand, and with kisses
My being enfolds.

'Sweetheart, quench your kisses,
For soon as you came
No kisses are needed,
My blood is aflame.

'With you standing by me
My face is on fire,
My bosom beats higher,
My eyes sparkle bright
As the stars in heaven's night!'

KOLTSÓV.

Happy Birds

Birds of God know naught of labour,
Naught of toil; they only care
Nests to build just for a season,
For their hearts are light as air.

Nightlong on a branch they slumber;
When the sun arises red
They obey God's voice and, singing
At His call, their wings they spread.

After Spring, glad Nature's glory,
Summer heat will come in strength,
Then with mist and dismal weather
Autumn will succeed at length.

Days for men of pain and dullness;
Birds across the blue take wing
To some distant foreign country,
There to sun themselves till Spring.

Pushkin.

Winter Evening

(*To his Old Nurse*)

THE heavens are darkened by the storm,
The snowy whirlwind wild,
Now roaring like a savage beast,
Now wailing like a child.
It strikes the crazy roof of straw
Which rattles with its shocks,
Then like a night-bound traveller
Loud at our window knocks.

Our tumble-down old dwelling-place
Is cheerless, robbed of light,
And by the window thou dost sit
Silent, dear nurse, to-night.
Is it the howling of the storm
That strikes thy old voice dumb,
Or art thou dropping off to sleep,
Lulled by thy spindle's hum?

Dear comrade of my troubled youth,
Come, drink and pass the cup,
Drink care away, and cheerfulness
Shall lift our spirit up.

Winter Evening

Sing me the song, how the blue bird
  Lived by the still sea-side,
Or sing the maid that in the morn
  To fetch the water hied.

The heavens are darkened by the storm,
  The snowy whirlwind wild,
Now roaring like a savage beast,
  Now wailing like a child.
Dear comrade of my troubled youth,
  Come, drink and pass the cup!
Drink care away, and cheerfulness
  Shall lift our spirit up.

PUSHKIN.

Arzrúm [1]

Stambúl the Giaours' praise doth take,
To-morrow with an iron tread
Stambúl will crush them like a snake,
Then halt, or onwards go, awake,
Stambúl that slept when hard bested.

Stambúl the Prophet now denies:
The worldly West with all its lies
Darkness in the wise East hath made.
Stambúl beguiled by sweets of vice
Prayer and the sword hath now betrayed:
Stambúl, once used to toil and fight,
In wine at prayer-time takes delight.

The light of faith is dimmed and banned,
In the bazaar the wives abound,
Old women at the crossways stand,
And men in the harém are found,
Where eunuchs slumber, bribe in hand.

Not so in Arzrúm, mountain pile,
In Arzrúm with its many ways,
We sleep not there in licence vile,
Nor live in froward lust, the while
Wine, fire, and noise our souls debase.

[1] Pushkin visited Arzrúm with a victorious Russian army in 1829. See J. D. Duff's *Russian Lyrics*, p. 47.

Arzrúm

We fast, a fountain's single rill
A sober drink to us affords,
Riding with furious onset still
We throng to war with dashing swords:
Jealous as eagles, guard our wives,
In hushed haréms to spend their lives,
And open only to their lords.

PUSHKIN.

The Contrast

DEAR, you will soon forget me,
  You I shall ne'er forget,
You'll find new loves for old ones,
  For me love's sun is set.

New faces soon will greet you,
  You'll choose yourself new friends,
New thoughts you'll get and haply
  New joy to make amends:

While I in silent sorrow
  Life's joyless way shall go,
And how I love and suffer
  Only the grave will know.

ZHADOVSKAYA.

The Lark

THE red sun lights the forest dark,
The white mist floats the vale along,
While in the blue the loud-voiced lark
Soaring uplifts his early song.
With potent voice high quivering
He carols in the light of the sun:
'Young spring is come, her reign begun;
Spring and her advent here I sing.
Gladsome and light of heart am I
Up in the boundless airy sky,
I see God's world and all its ways,
And seeing lift my song of praise.'

ZHUKOVSKY.

A Prayer

I PRAISE Thee, my Creator, thank and praise:
'Tis Thou hast given me my heart's pure flame.
How I have loved Thy fair created world,
And with what tears have magnified Thy name!
I weep, my tears are consecrate to Thee,
Summing my joys, my losses, and my pains,
The tribute of my heart, O Lord, to be
In the eternal speech Thy law ordains.
How I have loved Thy world of beauty fair!
What thoughts have I essayed!
Rejoiced in life's glad feast provided there,
Seen Thee, the unseen, in all that Thou hast made:
I fell, I learnt what tears and tumult meant.
The flesh is frail, the spirit still doth soar:
Thee have I loved, to Thee my heart was bent,
I thank Thee, O Creator, and adore.

KRASÓV.

A Night in a Village

Sultry air, the smoke of shavings,
  Dirt spread over all,
Feet and benches dirty; cobwebs
  To adorn the wall:
Smoke-begrimed each cottage chamber;
  Bread and water stale;
Spinners coughing, children crying—
  Want and woe prevail.
Hand to mouth lifelong they labour,
  Then a pauper's grave—
Ah! what need to learn the lesson—
  'Trust, my soul, be brave!'

Nikitin.

The Sailor

Day and night our sea's rude billows
  Uncompanionable rave:
In its spacious depths how many
  Hapless folk have found a grave!

Courage, comrade! through the tempest
  Straight upon my course I sail,
And my bark with light wings flying
  At no perilous surge will quail.

On the sea the cloud falls sudden,
  Wind blows fierce, black billows form,
Tempest threatens: on we struggle,
  Match our courage with the storm.

Courage, friend! though storm-clouds lower,
  Seething billows mountain high
Rise in wrath, and far unfathomed
  Sea's abysses open lie;

The Sailor

Far beyond the foulest weather
  Lies a blessèd land of peace,
Where the heavens are never darkened
  And the storms subside and cease.

Thither, friend, to cross the ocean
  Only valorous hearts avail:
Courage, friend! though storms be raging,
  On, with steadfast course, I sail.

YAZYKOV.

Nocturne

LONELY thou sleepest, monastery old,
Far in the wilds forgot,
Thy arches fallen, where the owl and bat
Flit screaming round the spot,
And through the window, long since robbed of glass
The night wind whistles loud,
'Mid clustered ivy, which the midnight moon
Lights, clear without a cloud;
And something glitters in the moonlight's sheen
And gleaming armour stirs,
While on the pavement rings with iron tread
The sound of clanking spurs.
And through the dark in dismal symphony
The organ's notes resound,
Then all is hushed, organ and walls for ay
Buried in sleep profound.

PHET.

The Road

FAINT shines the far moon
  Through misty night,
Sad lies the dead field
  In the moon's light.
White with frost along
  The road without end,
Bare-branched their long line
  Birches extend.
Bells tinkle, the team
  Swiftly whirls along,
My drowsy driver hums
  Softly his song.
Onward I travel
  In my crazy cart,
Sadly, pitying
  The land of my heart.

OGAREV.

Evening

When the clear evening time draws near
  Across the pool I love to gaze
And watch day's glory disappear
  While the first star begins to blaze;
To see the swallow's glancing wing
  Over the water's bosom dart
Intangible, swift vanishing
  Into the night. Within my heart
Throng dreaming fancies at that hour,
  Half melancholy and half gay,
And carry me by memory's power
  To live in moments far away.
I dream, and other days appear,
  I see the same still evening sky,
The sleeping waters of the mere,
  The solitary star on high,
The swallow—all the scene that wrought
Such magic in my heart and brought
  The gleam that nevermore shall die.

Ogarev.

In My Country

(THE SERF SPEAKS)

LUXURIANT corn of these my native fields,
  Forbidden fare you thrive:
You grow and radiant ears your blossom yields,
  While I am scarce alive.
How strange that I, a creature too of heaven
  (Such fate doth me befall),
See corn, that by my servile toil has thriven,
  Profit me not at all!

NEKRÁSOV.

The Schoolboy

The traveller meets a schoolboy on the road, and is led to speak of the power of education and of the open career in Russia.

Now, for God's sake get along!
  Sand, firs, sky without an end
Make a cheerless road to go.
  Here! come sit by me, my friend.

Bare-legged, grimy-faced, your chest
  Hardly covered up, you say:
That's no shame at all; the best
  Men, the great, have gone that way.

In your satchel you've a book,
  So you're off, I see, to learn;
Sure, your father's spent his last
  Pence to do you this good turn.

Sure, the sexton's wife has given
  Her last shilling, just the tip
Which the travelling merchant's dame
  Deigned into her hand to slip.

Or your father was a serf
  Just enfranchised? Well, what then?
Have no fear, that's nothing new,
  You'll get on like other men.

The Schoolboy

Soon you'll learn at school the tale
  How the Archangel peasant boy[1]
By his will and God's became
  Wise and great, in high employ.

Soon to Moscow you'll be brought—
  Folk in plenty are so kind—
Go to college and be taught:
  So your dream comes true, you'll find.

Then expands a wide career:
  Work and learn and forward press:
That is why my native land
  More than other lands I bless.

Gifted, Russia, are thy sons:
  Far from ruin is the land
Which such famous talents draws
  From the folk on every hand.

Generous, noble spirits these,
  Strong by force of love, beside
Those cold-blooded souls and vain
  Who are swollen with selfish pride.

NEKRÁSOV.

[1] Michael Lomonosov. See Prince Kropotkin's *Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature*, pp. 23–25.

The Cry of the Peasant

Show me the peasant's cottage—
  Such cot ne'er met my eyes—
Where he who sows and guards our land
  Groans not in grievous wise.

He groans on field and highway,
  At night upon the plains,
He groans in prison and in gaol,
  In mines and iron chains.

He groans in his own hovel,
  Robbed of God's sunshine fair,
Groans in each dull and petty town,
  Waiting for justice there.

Volga in spring's full flood-time
  Over the land spreads wide,
But Russia's flood of suffering
  Fills it with fuller tide.

Where the people is, groans are. Oh, folk of my heart,
What means it? Shall sorrow be ever your part?
Will you wake up at length in the fulness of strength,
Or obeying the law of the world in its course
Have you spent all your force?
Has the song, one long groan, you created, exprest
All you are? Has your spirit for ever sunk down into rest?

Nekrásov.

Farewell

FAREWELL, think not of days that failed,
Anger, despair, and tumult hot,
Of days when jealous darts assailed—
The storm and tears remember not,

But days when love for me and you
Arose a radiant star and kind,
Days when life's path ran smooth and true—
Bless these and keep them still in mind.

NEKRÁSOV.

Life

With child's caprice, fantastical as smoke,
Life changes fashion ever with fleeting time,
And seething still with anxious fearfulness
Mingles absurd and trivial with sublime.

What discord harsh, what picture manifold!
Here lovers kissing, there the dagger's blow,
Here harlequin who rings his saucy bells,
There 'neath his cross the prophet stooping low.

Shade comes with sunshine, and with prayer and tears
The hungry poor's rebellious, loud lament,
Last night the bloodshed of the stricken field,
To-morrow flow'rs with all their fragrant scent.

See precious pearls dirt-trodden by the crowd,
See fragrant fruit, all worm-eaten within;
But yesterday you were a hero proud,
To-day a coward pale, oppressed with sin.

Life

That's life, a sphinx; its law the moment is;
  And among folk none's wise enough to trace
And tell the crowd whither its movement tends
  Or catch the shifting features of its face.

'Tis sorrow all; yet all a potent charm—
  Glitter and light, disgrace and darkness blind,
Half seraph, half a bacchant drunk with wine,
  An ocean wide or prison close confined.

NADSON.

Evening

THE evening glory dies away,
A strip of ruby hue,
The silent village falls asleep
Beneath the glowing blue.
Only across the evening air
Is heard a dying song,
And through the wood the bubbling stream
Runs eddying along.
Ah what a night! Like giants stand
The slumbering trees around,
And hushed in sleep the emerald glades
Are wrapt in mist profound.
The clouds in strange capricious forms
Drive fast across the sky,
And light and darkness sweetly blent
On stems and leafage lie.
My heart with eagerness to breathe
The fresh night air is fain,
And oh! my spirit yearns for love
And happiness again.

NADSON

The Triumph of Love

O my brother, my friend, weary suffering soul,
Who'er thou art, faint not or fail!
Though falsehood and evil with mighty control
Over earth, drenched in weeping, prevail;
Though sacred ideals be reviled and downcast
'Mid the blood of the innocent slain,
Yet Baal, be sure, will be conquered at last,
And Love come to the world once again.

Not in circlet of thorns, nor in fetters of shame,
Not bowed by a cross to the ground,
Love will come in his strength and a glorious flame
In his hands to give light will be found.
No more tears on the earth, no more foemen or strife,
Slave, or suicide's tomb shall be here.
Hopeless want shall be gone, want that murders man's life,
Sword and pilloried shame disappear.

Ah! my friend, that bright advent's no dream of the blind,
No vain hope to be quenched like a spark;
Look how measureless evil oppresses mankind
And night beyond measure is dark:
But earth, sick of torture and blood, will arise,
Worn out by mad strife to despair,
And to Love, boundless Love, she will lift up her eyes,
Her eyes full of sorrow and prayer.

Nadson.

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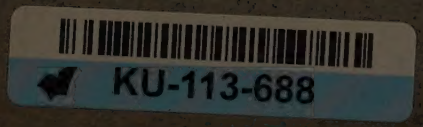
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